

United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 6: Humanitarian issues and other commitments I

*Trafficking in human beings;
Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings*

As prepared for delivery by Alex T. Johnson, U.S. Helsinki Commission
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Thank you, Madam Moderator.

The United States continues to expand efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, in line with the priorities of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. These efforts include continual improvements in agency coordination, proactive anti-trafficking policy development, robust engagement with civil society, and nearly \$100 million in Fiscal Year 2008 funding for domestic and international anti-trafficking efforts.

On December 23, 2008, then-President Bush signed the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, amending prior laws to expand efforts to reduce the pervasiveness of modern-day slavery. The William Wilberforce Act authorized greater coordinated action and additional appropriations, consistent with a number of OSCE Action Plan priorities. The law introduced mechanisms to increase technical assistance to foreign governments to inspect locations where forced labor occurs; included provisions to protect migrant workers and to address the problem of exploitation of children as soldiers; and provided for the establishment of an integrated database to aid the collection and analysis of data on trafficking in persons.

My government seeks to expand the increased awareness and policy improvements associated with the release of the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. The TIP Report continues to be a vital tool of diplomacy and a means of gauging the effectiveness of new anti-trafficking policies. One significant change associated with the TIP Report is the inclusion of a tier ranking for the United States. Future TIP Reports also will include references to the findings of the U.S. Department of Justice's regular report on U.S. government activities to combat trafficking in persons and includes recommendations for further action. This report is submitted to Congress and, of course, is subject to public scrutiny and comment.

The William Wilberforce Act also mandated an important change in the administration of the TIP Report. Beginning with the 2009 TIP Report, countries remaining on the Tier 2 Watch List for two consecutive years without concerted action to improve anti-trafficking efforts will automatically be downgraded to Tier 3. Fortunately, a notable achievement of the parties gathered here is that no OSCE participating States are ranked in Tier 3 in the 2009 TIP Report. However, a number of participating States remain on the Tier 2 Watch List, including Azerbaijan, Latvia, the Russian Federation, Moldova, Montenegro, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. While we continue to call for the Government of Uzbekistan to take

substantive action to end child labor exploitation, we welcome its efforts to raise public awareness of trafficking for sexual exploitation, to provide assistance to victims, and to prosecute a small number of traffickers. We hope the Government will extend its efforts to labor trafficking as well. The Government of the Slovak Republic significantly increased funding for anti-trafficking efforts, particularly assistance to victims. The Government of Turkey continued to target and disrupt trafficking networks, and improved prosecution of trafficking offenders. Several other Tier 2 Watch List countries made some efforts to address trafficking in persons but did not achieve notable results. We encourage all Tier 2 Watch List countries to continue and increase their efforts so that we can report significant improvements in all countries next year.

Unfortunately, one challenge among some of these States is the complicity in trafficking operations of law enforcement and other government officials. To root out this complicity, the accountability of law enforcement officials to the rule of law and punishment of guilty officials should be high priorities.

We must work together to ensure concerted improvement in anti-trafficking efforts throughout the OSCE region, so that no participating State falls to Tier 3. The United States looks forward to enhanced collaboration to meet this goal, particularly in the realm of prosecution and the strengthening of law enforcement efforts.

Madam Moderator, OSCE participating States today are faced with the unique challenge of the global economic downturn and its exacerbation of trafficking in persons. The economic downturn has expanded demand for cheap goods and services, which in turn has increased demand for forced labor. Lack of economic opportunity may also increase the supply of people who are vulnerable to being trafficked. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) described this trend in its *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* in February this year. The UNODC observed that businesses and multi-national corporations were turning now more to forced, cheap, and child labor to cope with their financial struggles. Thus, we must increase partnerships to stem this disturbing trend and to address economic challenges, always with the plight of potential victims of labor trafficking in mind.

Thank you, Madam Moderator.